

Filipino Gay Stereotypes in Mainstream and Independent Films

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Abstract - This study shed light on gay stereotypes as depicted from mainstream films and independent films by determining (1) the gay stereotypes portrayed in the films, (2) the deviations from the gay stereotypes, and the (3) implications of the gay portrayals on the present concept of Filipino gays. Employing the descriptive content analysis, the researchers selected and examined carefully four (4) films entitled *Manay Po* and *Markova: Comfort Gay* and two independent films, *Masahista (The Masseur)* and *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros)*. The gay stereotypes depicted in the selected movies are the effeminate gays and discrete gays. The effeminate gays are portrayed in the films as crossdressers, parlorista, with flamboyant lifestyle and feminine mannerisms. On the other hand, discrete gays are shown as bisexual males, with masculine and female self image. However, there is a deviation from these gay stereotypes that is the “same sex marriage” among gays as portrayed in the scenes from the movie *Manay Po*. Of the films reviewed, it was only *Manay Po* that captured both types of gay males at the same time. Majority of the stereotypes depicted in the films leaned towards the “bakla” who is the very subject of ridicule and discrimination in a macho and paternalistic society like the Philippines. However, unlike the effeminate “bakla,” the discreet is well accepted. Those who have revealed their sexual orientation, but remained discreet in their

appearances, earned the respect and admiration of their colleagues.

Keywords - gay, stereotypes, bisexual, independent films, effeminate.

INTRODUCTION

Gay themes were visible in Philippine cinema and prints in the 1970s and they became more popular in the last decade because of the blossoming of homosexual culture in Manila. Altman (2001) mentioned that the number of gay establishments sprouted in Metro Manila and in Southeast Asian region beginning the mid 1990s, and images of fashionable muscled gays became very visible. The Internet also contributed to the flourishing of gay culture as it provided avenue for interaction and forming gay communities through the various websites, chatrooms, and netgroups. Mass media such as television and movies, on the other hand, have more and more featured movies depicting gay lives. More so, long running television shows have become more sensitive to gender and sexual diversities by featuring life stories of gender-normative gays.

Generally speaking, there is no doubt that local film talents and directors are ever ready for gay movies. If ever that any films are given applause and tolerance by spectators, it is because these movies are novelty; they are offshoots of an experimentation in cinema that invigorates the interest of audiences hungry for visual delight. As long as these motion pictures do not “idealize” homosexual unions or contain graphic features, they can enjoy reaping the rewards of experimentation.

Like many cultures in the world, the Philippines have its own history of gay sexuality. Here in the Philippines, the term *gay* has been used loosely to include homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, crossdressers, and effeminate men. Filipino gays are mostly stereotyped as effeminate, crossdressers, and hairdressers. *Bakla*, a derogatory Filipino word for gay, is commonly used; *tomboy* has a similar function and refers to lesbians, usually of the butch and masculine type. For Filipino gays, the Tagalog phrase “paglaladlad ng kapa” (literally means “unfurling the cape”) refers to the coming-out process. Although gays and lesbians are generally tolerated within Philippine society, there are still

widespread cases of discrimination.

How Filipino films and television portray local gay guys greatly affect the level of consciousness/tolerance and acceptance of the general public towards gays. For instance, if there is continuance of projecting the image of the extreme flamboyant screaming *parloristas* and over the top gay comedians - then solidifying the usual gay stereotypes will pervade also. There is the usual association of gay guys to girly types, sward-speaking divas, and over-the-top *fashionistas*. This is the image that young gays usually follow and would love to follow. What seems to be amiss is the reality that gay guys come in different characters and personalities, pursuing varied interests and doing all sorts of jobs, and could be as masculine and nice or as feminine and beautiful- and being gay is just a preference and not a definition.

This study determined the gay stereotypes depicted in the films, the portrayals that deviated from the stereotypes and the repercussions of these gay portrayals to the present concept of Filipino gays.

FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on the study of Bobby Benedicto (2008), published in the Journal of Gay Lesbian Studies. As cited by Benedicto (2008), the Filipino gays are traditionally labeled as effeminate. However, due to the changing concepts of society and other influences from the West, the discrete gays became part of the Philippine society. Hence, effeminate gays and discrete gays are now considered in the context of Philippine society as gay stereotypes.

According to Benedicto (2008) effeminate gays are characterized as *crossdressers* (those who adopt the dress and manner of a female sex), *parlorista* (pertaining to a gay who works in a salon), with *flamboyant lifestyle* (those who are showy in their being gay), and having *feminine mannerisms* (those who act like real women). These effeminate gays do not just embrace homosexuality but dress effeminately and make all the changes that would make them look like a real woman. Typically they are attracted to a homosexual or to a masculine gay. They have this broad knowledge about beauty contest. They model swimsuits and dresses, and they participate in contests such as "Miss Gay Philippines," just like women who compete to become "Miss. Philippines" or "Miss. Universe." This pageant closely resembles other

beauty pageants worldwide. These gays also have their own language, they communicate with peers using gay lingo.

Meanwhile, the discrete gays are known as masculine gay males, who resemble more closely the Western idea of a gay. They are less extreme. Since his being gay is discreet, he is well accepted in his heterosexual peers. There are generally three types of discreet gays: (1) bisexual male, (2) a male with a masculine self image but with a strong sexual orientation towards men, or (3) a gay with a female self image but an outward behavior that is masculine. Common traits among discreet men are an outward appearance that is masculine, and that the identity is hidden or partially revealed to some. The Filipino bisexual male, is a discrete type. He can be emotionally attached to both male and female. Some have girlfriends and boyfriends at the same time, or at some other times were married. Few bisexual males reveal their sexual preferences to their partners. Most often, they do not reveal their bisexuality to their female partners. Some uses their bisexuality to cover-up their homosexual orientation, therefore, they are more gays than bisexuals. The masculine discrete has an exclusive gay orientation, but thinks, feels and acts masculine. His self image is masculine. Just like the bisexual male, he avers the effeminate gays. The discrete gay has a feminine self but discretely dress like a male. Femininity is evident in the way he speaks and acts. Since he considers himself discreet, he will deny any homosexual inclinations. He will adamantly assert his claim that he is masculine. To some gay friends, he may claim to be bisexual or masculine discreet. He rejects labels that he is effeminate. He appears to have an aversion towards the effeminate. Those who are able to accept their homosexual identity feels comfortable with effeminate gays.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This inquiry investigated the depictions and portrayals of gay characters in mainstream and independent films such as *Manay Po, Markova: Comfort Gay, Masahista* (The Massuer), and *Ang Pagdadalagang ni Maximo Oliveros* (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros). Specifically, it determined the (1) gay stereotypes depicted in the selected movies; (2) other gay portrayals that deviate from gay stereotypes; and (3) implications of gay portrayals on the present concept of Filipino gays.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The principal method of defining gay stereotypes in mainstream and independent films is content analysis. By content analysis, the researchers carefully analyzed and interpreted scenes and conversations of the principal and minor gay characters in the films, *Manay Po*, *Markova: Comfort Gay*, *Masahista (The Masseur)*, and *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros)*. At first, the researchers procured DVD copies of the films mentioned above. Then they set a common time to review the films so that salient details were studied carefully. Afterwards, important notes were taken such as portrayals that adhere to and deviate from gay stereotypes as portrayed in the films. Important quotes from the film were also provided by the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Gay stereotypes depicted in the selected movies

The gay films *Manay Po*, *Markova: Comfort Gay*, *Masahista (The Masseur)* and *Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros)* conveyed a variety of gay stereotypes. They are presented and discussed as follows:

Manay Po

Manay Po tells the story of Luz, a small time jeweler who dreams of making it big so as to provide a better life for her family. Her life revolves around her brood of three namely, Oscar, Orson, and Orweil and her live-in boyfriend Gerry. With the help of her good friend and maid Marites, Luz was able to raise her children normally despite the absence of a husband. Oscar is a rising architect from a major firm and is betrothed to be married to his girlfriend of five years Pauline. Unknown to Luz and everyone else, Oscar is a closet homosexual and is keeping his relationship with engineer best friend Adrian Pengson a secret. Orson, on the other hand, is openly gay much to Oscar's discomfort. He is fun-loving, sweet and engaged in numerous extracurricular activities in school. His one true love is his best friend

Marky, whom he always tries to impress by lavishing him with affection. Then there's Orwell – a young teenager who is at crossroads with regard to his sexuality. Due to his confusion, Orwell pretty much keeps to himself. As such, Luz and his two brothers are clueless about his real identity. In spite of her children's questionable sexualities, their family-paints a picture of a happy family – a home filled with laughter and unconditional love.

Of the three siblings, Oscar Dimagiba an architect by profession is in a relationship with Adrian Pengson, a fellow architect and bestfriend while in college. At the opening scene, both of them are seen holding each other's hands while their pictures are being taken after the college graduation ceremonies. He is to be wed to his long-time girlfriend Pauline when he decides to marry his bestfriend. Oscar's gayness is shown by his shifty eyes as he looks at the construction workers' bodies lifting weights and mixing cement.

Nearing the door to Oscar's office, Adrian surprisingly kisses him. Not wanting the management to know his intimate secret affair and sexuality, he tells Adrian to tone down his acts of affection. Having cleared the air, they exchanged Happy Anniversary's in celebration of their seventh year as boyfriends. Adrian puts on a ring in Oscar's finger and appreciates his love and affection. Oscar however leaves his gift to Adrian at the car. Another portion in the film shows their homosexual friends tie the knot along the beach and then Oscar pops the question to Adrian, "Will you marry me?" Adrian replied, "I will, I do." At the end of the movie, both of them exchange vows like their homosexual friends.

In the movie, Orson Castello is a flamboyant gay who always steals the show in sports where he runs the race in drag, in an oratorical contest wearing a *Cariñosa costume*, in cheerleading and the much-coveted Miss Gay University. Orson has always been the receiver of Oscar's anti-gay litanies therefore both are immiscible like water and oil and there are scenes that attest to that. One of which is when Oscar is angry with Orson for spending a lot of time in the shower. Because Oscar is running late, he pushes Orson and falls in the ground.

Orson like any bonafide flaming gay never forgets his Miss Universe and are having trivia quiz about it with Frida Tamayo, the reigning Miss Gay University and Cher, a Miss Gay University in the making. Though his ways are feminine in his choice of wardrobe, friends, and mannerisms, one person considers him as a bestfriend, a straight male

named Marky whom he calls *papa*. Marky who waits for Orson at the school play ground warns Orson not to hold hands or they will be mistaken as lovers.

As a gay, Orson can detect a man's true sexuality using the so-called gaydar. Therefore it is Orson who unlocked and confirmed Oscar's sexuality. One disappointing and eventful night, Gerry decides to take the stress off his already clouded mind by taking a shower. When Oscar is asked where Gerry could find the bath soap, he stares at his ripped body. When Gerry is about to get the bath soap from a kitchen drawer, his towel accidentally falls leaving only his underwear to be ogled at by Oscar. Orson calls his gay friends and says, "*Day? Confirmed.*"

That same day, Orson gets invited by the reigning Miss Gay University to sign up for the coveted beauty contest. He sees it as another golden opportunity to get back at Marky's girlfriend, Gina who is Miss IT. With the title in the bag, he is even with Gina. Very determined to clinch the crown, he trains and rehearses at home together with Orwell and Maritess. To prepare for the final night of the pageant, he instructs his mother to safe keep his savings to buy his evening gown and not spend it for any unwise purpose. He goes on fantasizing who will be the designer of his evening gown for the competition. He also does not want to be called "*Kuya*" in public by his younger brother. In the end, Orson wins Miss Gay University besting other hopefuls in the contest and Marky is his escort.

The youngest son Orwell has identity issues and is confused whether or not to wear a gown or a pair of trousers. He is caught in a fight during a soccer warm up exercise routine because he is being teased by Robin as "*bakla*" which he vehemently denies. His gayness becomes apparent when his attention is distracted by an attractive male passerby or his hunky father-to-be George or by his shrills when he is surprised or is browsing through male magazines showing ripped bodies of models. In his attempt to prove his manhood, Orwell and his bestfriend go to a *casa* when all of a sudden the police showed up and both of them tightly hold hands. Overall, Manay Po portrayed both the effeminate and discreet gays in the case of the three brothers. The characters demonstrate strong attraction to a heterosexual male or a masculine gay, possession of feminine ways and mannerisms, use of gay lingo in communicating with peers, and masculine self image.

Markova: Comfort Gay

Markova: Comfort Gay, directed by Gil Portes is an unconventional true story of Walter Dempster, Jr, otherwise known as Markova presented in three stages- as a teenager, as a comfort gay, and as den mother in the Home for the Golden Gays. Escaping the torment of growing up with an abusive older brother, he and his friends found further suffering at the hands of Japanese soldiers, forced into sex work to survive. But even after the war, Markova's struggle continued.

In the opening scene, Markova wakes up to a dream where he is dressed in red and apprehended by Japanese troops. The moment he wakes up, he tells the story of his life as a comfort gay and goes on with his ordinary life as a resident of the shelter.

Walterina and the residents in the shelter have a way with words. Walterina for one relates his experience by injecting gay lingo and delivers it in an ultra feminine tone of voice. On his way he passes by a store where two straight males look at him with disgust. He walks in a crisscross manner holding an umbrella on his left hand and a fan on his right. He also has a religious side then opens up about his work. Then a bevy of future entertainers await his beauty lessons on catwalk:

Describing himself as a beauty queen, his gayness elicits a variety of reactions within his family; his mother and two sisters accept him openly; his father does not care whether he is gay; while his brother is abusive towards him both verbally and physically that Markova calls him *Paquito Diaz ng buhay ko*, *halimaw* and *guardiya sibil*. When he is alone in his room, he tries on his younger sister's clothes and puts on makeup. During the Japanese occupation in the Philippines, she joins Miss Comfort Gay wearing a geisha costume along with other cross-dressing contestants and won the title.

There is one scene when he visits Roco his brother's best friend who trick, harass, and rapes him. Then, along with his friends, he works as an entertainer at Manila's nightclubs dressing up as females. One time he and his friends are caught by the Japanese who first thought they are women. As punishment for deceiving them, they are dragged off to one of the army barracks where they are serially raped several times a day, in between doing housekeeping chores.

After the end of the Japanese War ushering in the Liberation, Markova continues his former life, picking up American GIs, who are much more understanding and generous. Together with Carmen

and Anita, they relive the glory days of their beauty queen days and femininity. The movie also shows what happened to Anita and Carmen. Towards the conclusion of the film, both of them die but it is Anita's case that is very alarming. Markova visits Anita in the hospital who is fighting to survive the complications of AIDS.

The gay stereotypes found in this film are gays who flirt with a straight guy; they walk like a supermodel and participate in gay beauty pageants and Santa Cruzan, and work in entertainment and fashion industry. Furthermore, these effeminate gays are not accepted by their family and are abused physically.

***Masahista* (The Masseur)**

Masahista is a story about a young masseur named Iliac (played by Coco Martin) who caters to gay clientele. In here, sex is an immediate consequence of massage. One ordinary night, a gay writer (Alan Paule) becomes Iliac's first customer of the day. But once outside the parlor, his girlfriend, a bar girl who works in Japan, asserts her sexual dominion over him. Back home, his estranged father died and as Iliac makes the trip to the province, he is faced with the reality of death, love, life and survival. The masseur then carries out his defined duties and roles—to his father and family, to his girlfriend, to his trade and to the one customer who has made him a favorite and seems to return for more.

The focus of the film revolves around Iliac, an innocent-looking masseur who hails from Pampanga and Alfredo also known as Marina Hidalgo, a writer of Tagalog gay love stories. Iliac asks Alfredo how come he knows about the massage parlor, he jokingly replies that he is given the information by Jennifer Hawkins, a Miss Universe. This friend of his changes names every year as a new title holder is being crowned Miss Universe. The gay characters are customers and pimps at a massage parlor cum brothel. In the movie, the masseurs are Iliac, Axel, John, Andrew, Lester, Dennis, Louie, Edwin, Jay, and Ferdinand. The brothel sells sex to homosexuals.

A lot of the Iliac and Alfredo's sessions were included in the movie, with some scenes at neighboring cubicles. The movie provides sustained views of male derrieres. There is only a brief flash of frontal male nudity -- a masseur who is allergic to baby powder chokes when he produces a cloud of baby powder to rub into a client's back. There

are also many images of lean, brown bodies in tightie-whities (briefs) and gay clients conversing about penises.

The gay stereotypes evident in the film are the obsession with masculine male bodies and the use of feminine names.

***Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros)**

Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo) is a dramatic indie film released in 2005 dealing with the coming-of-age of a homosexual boy played by Nathan Lopez. The story focuses on Maximo Oliveros, a gay pre-teen, living in one of Manila's slum areas together with his father and brothers, who are petty thieves. Maximo is torn between protecting his family of thieves and his love for Victor, his police friend.

In this film, Maximo assumes feminine chores in the household after the death of his mother. These chores include cooking, washing dishes and clothes, cleaning the house, and repairing damaged clothes for his tough, gritty, and macho family.

One scene shows Maximo and his friends pretending as Miss Universe contestants, dressed in colorful national costumes, showcasing their talents in the talent competition, and answering questions in the Q & A portion. They are also found at a neighborhood watching romantic films and idolizing leading ladies. Moreover, they are also seen browsing fashion magazines updating the goings-on of their favorite actresses and television personalities. '*SI Sandara oh... Ganda ganda niya....*' After watching movies with friends, he is cornered by two *tambays* at a dark alley where a pseudo rape ensued. It is in this very scene that he met Victor, a policeman, whom he develops an infatuation.

In almost half of the film, Maximo is sporting flamboyant wardrobe of striking tank tops, shorts, flip flops, head band, and hair clips, drawing attention with his over-the-top diva walk with swishing hip movements and signature effeminate voice. When he is asked by Victor about maybe having a girlfriend, he says, "*Kadiri naman yan Kuya Victor. Girlfriend. Di yata kami talo*". This movie depicted a gay with a strong attraction to a heterosexual man, and performs household chores.

To sum up, from the characters portrayed in the reviewed movies,

the stereotypical gay is one who is "*bakla*". The term "*bakla*" symbolizes Filipino queerness. Some of the noticeable traits characterizing a typical "*bakla*" is having an attraction with a heterosexual male as seen in Orson, Orwell, and Maximo or a humorous display of flirting as in Markova. Oscar was the only central character among the films analyzed who is having a steady relationship with a man. In the parlance of gayhood, the "*bakla*" possesses what is called the female heart or "*pusong babae*". This term encapsulates the core of the social construction of the "*bakla*" - that of the male body with a female heart. The yearnings and needs of the "*bakla*" are seen to be similar to women's. This construction explains why a "*bakla*" would say they are looking for a "*real*" man; by "*real men*" they mean straight. More recent data from the 2002 YAFS-3 (Silverio, 2004) indicate that 1.3% of Filipino male youth report having had attractions to other males, while 14.9% of sexually active young Filipino men have had sex with another male. In addition, 2% of single Filipino men have gone "*steady*" with another man. Still the exact proportions of Filipino gay/bisexual youth in the general population seem unclear.

Moreover, a "*bakla*" is stereotyped to embrace femininity as his way of life. The "*bakla*" celebrates his femininity by having him called by the female counterpart of his real name or an alias usually a female name. This is evident in the use of Maxi for Maximo Oliveros, Walterina Markova for Walter Dempster Jr., Marina Hidalgo for Alfred, and Jennifer Hawkins for Alfred's friend. Also, the "*bakla*" effeminate mannerisms such as feminine dressing, desire to be female, girl playmate/friend preference, feminine gesturing, and wearing lipstick or other makeup. In Markova, the principal character participated in a Santacruzian dressed in a beautifully beaded terno holding a cross.

An additional stereotype of gay males is their wide knowledge of beauty pageants particularly Miss Universe. For some reason, gay males love watching beauty pageants, as far as stereotypes are concerned. These events are a celebration of beauty and glamor that many gay people really value the most. Gay males would list Miss Universe in their top priority television programs to watch and look forward to.

The film *Masahista* displays another stereotype about gays who are obsessed with masculine male bodies especially penises and are sexually active. Conversations of penile size and male virility filled

the massage establishment translating to fear and concern among straight males especially when they find themselves in men's rooms. Straight males report of sexual harassment by gay males in men's rooms with their piercing gazes or peeping at male urinals. Because of this objectification of male bodies, a prevalent advertising strategy to reach gay male consumers is through the homoerotic appeal, which objectifies male bodies as sexual objects, such as the image of studs or the "hypersexual gym bunnies". When commenting on the highly sexual message of the Calvin Klein ad, informants show anxious concerns of this hypersexual image. Scholars have suggested that social prejudice against gays tends to define homosexuals as inherently amoral human beings that live mainly for the pursuit of pleasure.

In the same film gay sex is portrayed seriously and artfully. An aerial camera drifts from one tiny cubicle to the next as nude masseurs knead their clients' glistening bare backs, drawing a nice parallel between the literal and psychological claustrophobia of the massage parlor. In this space, nudity is not only sensual, but also an essential sign of vulnerability. Stripped of their clothing, these men are supposed to cater to the requests of their clientele.

Whitam (1990) suggests that about 80% of men from working- and lower-class origins participated in some kind of prostitution with a bakla or baklas. The majority of gay bars in Manila and other tourist spots are hustler bars. It must be noted that outside Manila and the tourist areas there are no organized male prostitution rings. They are mostly informational transactions between baklas and seemingly straight males. The flow of money and gifts goes from the bakla to the call boy or boy friend. This preference for seemingly straight men is further clarified by the ideal type of male prostitute the bakla would interact with as opposed to the gay foreign tourist. Most of his informants presented effeminate mannerisms. In contrast, Filipino clientele of male prostitutes insist on masculine acting and looking men. Indeed for the bakla, the male prostitute or the call boy should represent the paragon of masculinity.

Despite being in a country where more than 80 percent of the people are living in poverty, it is expected that the bakla will fare better economically than the rest of the population. This is the social script of the bakla. In order to fulfill his inscribed role, a bakla has to slave away at work in order to survive and get what he is told he should desire-

the “straight” macho man. He is told to suffer and not expect to have his needs filled. The ideological rationale for this situation is that, like a woman, he must suffer, but unlike a woman- being a pseudo-woman- he must pay.

Very visible among the four films is the use of gay lingo or language when the gay characters communicate with their peers. Swardspeak or gay lingo is a vernacular language derived from Englog and is used by a number of gay Filipinos. It uses elements from Tagalog, English, and Spanish, and some are from Japanese, as well as celebrities’ names and trademark brands, giving them new meanings in the context of this unique language. It is largely localized, too, with gay communities using the lingo making use of words derived from the languages and/or dialects used in their areas, including Cebuano, Ilonggo, Waray, Bicolano, et cetera. A unique trait of swardspeak is that it immediately identifies the speaker as homosexual, making it easy for people of that orientation to signal to each other in a place where such tendencies are not easy to display. If a woman is adept at gay lingo she is called “babaeng bakla”. This creates an exclusive world among its speakers and helps them to resist cultural assimilation.

Another stereotype of gay males touches their family background. In *Markova*, the gay character is beaten up by his brother signifying that gay males are not accepted in their respective families. The social intolerance and discrimination against homosexuality starts in the family where abuse has been often directed at children who reveal their homosexuality. In a study conducted by Iwag Dabaw (1999), majority of the respondents cited “non-acceptance” by family members, community and even teachers as reasons that prevent them from coming out. “Acceptance does not mean unconditional acceptance. For example, there are families who may accept their gay son to cross dress but cannot take it when he brings home his lover. Homophobia is still prevalent in families, especially among straight male members. “My older brother does not even want me to go near my nephew for fear that they would be like me,” one participant of an FGD reveals (Iwag Dabaw, 1999).

Because gay males are pseudo-females, therefore their role behaviors are expected to lean strongly towards femininity. In Filipino society, a woman’s role is that of a wife, mother, and homemaker (Gonzalez, 1977; Baylon, 1975; Asprer, 1980; Makil, 1981; Sobrichea, 1990). Further, Zablan (1997) has noted that a woman is expected to wash and iron

clothes, care for her children and husband, and to keep her house neat and clean. According to Jimenez (1981), masculinity is defined by being *malusog* (healthy), *malakas* (strong), *malaki ang katawan* (big bodied), *maskulado* (muscular) while femininity is defined as *mabini* (demure), *pino ang kilos* (refined), *mahinhin* (modest) (Jimenez, 1981). In the case of Maximo, he assumes maternal roles in the household as a result of the death of her mother such as cleaning the house, mending damaged clothes, cooking, and the like. He even bathed a filthy boy from their neighborhood and brought Victor lunch at his precinct. This points out to the idea that gay males have “maternal” instincts or mother-figures. Under exacting adherence to masculinity, males are not supposed to perform chores stereotyped to be strictly for females. Society dictates that male members of the household are supposed to chop wood, do carpentry work, electrical repairs and the like.

The physical attributes of a stereotypical gay male parallels that of a beauty queen or a beautiful woman- very fit body frame, lean, curvaceous, long jet black hair in order for them to put justice to female actuations and be a Santacruzian queen or a pseudo-female performer or entertainer. Their female-like bodies would help them fit in their costumes and accentuate their swishing and hyper feminine gestures (Canell, 1995). For a young gay guy, joining a beauty contest is like a big debut- an event towards becoming a “true blue girl-gay-guy” and the ultimate expression- full of magic, excitement and comedy. Being one with these amazingly glamazons of the puroks and fulfilling a dream of becoming a princess or a queen provides unexplainable joy or euphoria by becoming the best or even worst version of a gay’s femininity, gaiety or deity. This is also seen as the ultimate expression or freedom of being one’s true beautiful self.

In terms of their jobs, gay males have always been popularly known to be employed in the show business, entertainment, and fashion industry. In the movies, Markova was an entertainer during the Japanese and American occupations then worked as a beauty consultant for *japayukis*. Gay men deviate from the masculine norm that males should have manly jobs. One reason people assume that some jobs are male jobs is that for whatever reason, males are actually more likely to occupy them. Another possibility is that people see jobs are masculine because they believe that the job calls for those traits typically possessed by males (Cejka and Eagly, 1999; Mellon, Crano

and Schmitt, 1982; Shinar, 1975).

The proliferation of gay males in these industries is due to the intense creative input they provide the entertainment industry that in the Philippines, these industries harbor a lot of gay workers such as choreographers, production assistants, dancers, caterers, make-up artists, directors, and many others. The extraordinary and unparalleled artistic talents of gay males in these industries have made a name in the likes of Bernardo Bernardo, Roderick Paulate, Rene Salud, Pito Moreno, and many others.

Other gay portrayals that deviate from gay stereotypes

Very few gay portrayals deviate from common gay stereotypes. This is shown by the images projected by the characters in *Manay Po*. The possibility of same-sex marriage in the Philippines is portrayed in scenes where gay couples Robin and Roel and Oscar and Adrian are joined in matrimony.

In a conservative and Christian country like the Philippines, marriage is only restricted to the heterosexuals. The debate over providing gay males the right to be legally married to their homosexual partners has long been fought. Legislation that would remove recognition of existing same-sex unions from Philippines law have been introduced in both the Congress and the Senate. House Bill 1245 introduced by representative Rozzano Rufino Biazon would only allow marriage between “natural born males and natural born females”. This bill seeks to amend the Family Code to prohibit such marriages. Aside from being against the laws of God and the laws of nature, marriages under these circumstances are against the interest of society in general. Not only does it stretch the limits of custom, tradition and social norms, it endangers the interests of those entering into marriages who might not realize that the person they intend to marry, have children and spend the rest of their lives with, is originally of the same biological make up as they”. Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago, who sponsored the measure, said, “marriage is a union founded on the distinction of sex”. That contracting parties must be of different sex is, in fact, a requirement under the provisions on legal capacity.” The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has urged lawmakers to refuse recognition to homosexual civil unions.

One of the arguments against gay marriage is the fact that people aren't comfortable with the idea stems primarily from the fact that for many years, society has promoted the idea that a marriage between members of the same sex is ludicrous and that marriage is a sacred institution and gay marriage violates that sanctity.

The implications of Filipino gay portrayals on the present concept of Filipino gays

Despite all the discriminations and prejudices that abound in every society, the Filipino society still cannot ignore the reality of the presence of these gays as portrayed in the films reviewed. The representation of these gays in the films simply reveals that gays are everywhere and somehow have influenced the entertainment and fashion industries.

However, despite the tolerance given to Filipino gays, there are still some gays who are not accepted at home and some are abused. Unlike the effeminate *bakla*, the discreet is well accepted. Those who have revealed their sexual orientation, but remained discreet in their appearances, earned the respect and admiration of their colleagues. Conversely, this is only true in a tolerant society or environment. There are still institutions and work places where homosexuals, whether overt or not, are averred of, and could mean their dismissal or loss of tenure.

On the other hand, the acceptance of discrete gays who work in different institutions, even in the academe by a vast majority in the Philippines may somehow influence the way Filipinos perceive gays. Moreover it may also encourage effeminate and flamboyant gays to be discreet in their actions and manner of dressing to gain the acceptance and respect of the people around them – their family, colleagues, peers, and the community as a whole. It is also interesting to note that there are now males who are open about their sexual orientation, but remains masculine in their physical appearance and manner of dressing. Some of them are even into muscle building, frequenting fitness gyms and sports club. This is indeed totally different from the traditional image of Filipino gays.

Of all the four films that were reviewed, only one film shows deviation from the gay stereotypes and portrayals. *Manay Po* shows scenes of gay characters getting married. This portrayal suggests a

possibility that same sex marriage may be accepted in the country just like in other countries.

But considering the fact that the Filipinos are predominantly Catholics, conservatives, and have adhered to the tradition of marriage between a man and a woman, it might go a long way for the Filipinos to accept the possibility of same sex marriage. The church's view of marriage as a union of man and woman has been in existence long before any nation, religion, or law was established. In fact, the marital union is the human and social institution upon which civilization has always been structured.

CONCLUSION

The representations of gay males in mass media help shape how society thinks of the gay community. The portrayals of the gay characters show the variety of gay personalities and characteristics that are predominant in the society. There is on one side characters exemplifying the flaming and flamboyance of the feminine gay and on the other side the manliness of the masculine gay at various intensities. Of the films reviewed, it was only *Manay Po* that captured both types of gay males at the same time. Majority of the stereotypes depicted in the films leaned towards the "bakla" who is the very subject of ridicule and discrimination in a macho and paternalistic society like the Philippines.

As shown in the reviewed films, unlike the effeminate *bakla*, the discreet is well accepted. Those who have revealed their sexual orientation, but remained discreet in their appearances, earned the respect and admiration of their colleagues. Conversely, this is only true in a tolerant society or environment. There are still institutions and work places where homosexuals, whether overt or not, are averred of, and could mean their dismissal or loss of tenure.

In all the four films that were reviewed, only one film deviated from the gay stereotypes and portrayals. It is the same sex marriage in *Manay Po*. In this matter, the implication of these Filipino gay portrayals is that, Some Filipinos gays may have started contemplating on getting married with their own kind. However, it will be slow process among Filipinos to be able to accept the possibility of same sex marriage considering that the Philippines is a pre-dominantly Catholic country.

Moreover, the state also specifies that the recognition and consecration of marriage as a union is only between a man and a woman.

Fifty years ago, homosexuality was considered an absolute abomination. Even twenty years ago it was taboo for anyone to admit they were gay. Yet today, homosexuality is not only accepted but is encouraged. One could even make a case for it being stuffed down our throats. Turn on the TV and at any given time you can find a show with homosexual characters. Many of the commercial films now either have homosexual content, if not a homosexual theme. Other early societies permitted certain forms of homosexuality, but were not necessarily free alternatives to establish marriage and family.

However, the Filipino gays' sexual preferences are now influenced by western countries since homosexual acts are legal in the west. The recognition of same sex relationships and same sex marriage is legally accepted in some western countries. Moreover, they also have an anti discrimination law that protects the homosexual from discrimination of the society they are in.

Therefore caution and careful study should be considered in tackling social ills and predicaments of gay males in films so that negative and offensive stereotypes are not reinforced in society. This study thus concludes with an urgent call for more research studying the relationship between the gay images in cinema, identity formation, and the broader gay rights movements. Clarification and open discussion on the stereotypes of gay males most especially would be made possible in a professional and academic atmosphere. This would also pave the way for gay rights activists to educate and inform society on the various gay-related violence, intolerance and discrimination in school and employment. The gay community could also benefit from the study in educating them on the spreading messages of gay stereotypes in the media so that they could air their voice especially in legislation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the results of the study, the following are recommended:

1. Since most of the portrayals of gays in the movies reviewed predominantly focus on the effeminate gays, other films that portray discreet gays should also be studied.

2. Film makers should focus on positive and inspirational gay messages like the case of *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros) since most gay-themed movies constantly use graphic and pornographic scenes that reinforce the negative stereotype that gay males are immoral.
3. Other independent films dealing on gay portrayals can be reviewed in order to discover more the different images and personalities of Filipino gays.
4. Since today's cinematic themes particularly independent films are attached on the confusion of gayness therefore it would be best to discuss the many issues affecting gay individuals in Philippine society.
5. Other researchers may also focus on thematic analysis of these films.
6. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on other mainstream and independent films using the sociological approach.

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